

# Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction, and Learning (C-SAIL) Survey -- Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. What is the Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction, and Learning (C-SAIL)?

The Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction, and Learning (C-SAIL) is a federally funded research and development center led by the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) and its partners, American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the University of Southern California (USC). C-SAIL is conducting four studies to address some of the most pressing questions about standards-based education reform for all students, and includes a focus on students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs). These studies are producing valuable information that informs practitioners and policymakers engaged in the implementation of challenging academic state standards.

## 2. What is the purpose of the C-SAIL Survey?

We are working with five partner states: California, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Texas, to administer a survey to district administrators, principals, and selected teachers. In 2015-16, we conducted the survey in Kentucky, Ohio, and Texas. In 2016-17, we are conducting the survey in California and Massachusetts. The results of the survey will help practitioners and policymakers to better understand state-, district-, and school-level efforts to implement challenging academic state standards and compare standards implementation and effects across states, districts, and schools. Preliminary results of the 2015-16 survey can be found at: <http://www.c-sail.org/>.

## 3. Why is it important to conduct a survey on challenging academic state standards?

The survey will provide a detailed picture of the supports available to schools and teachers to implement challenging academic state standards, as well as information on progress toward implementation. Based on an analysis of the survey responses, the C-SAIL team will examine how educators across the five partner states understand and interpret the standards; assess the nature and quality of support and guidance at the state, district, and school levels; and measure whether and how teachers report they are changing their practices. The information collected through this survey will be useful to states and districts and will enable C-SAIL to identify what facilitates the implementation of high-quality standards what barriers may exist. The survey will provide a valuable source of information about what is working and what is not, so districts and states can learn from each other.

## 4. What type of organization is American Institutes for Research ([www.air.org](http://www.air.org))?

AIR is a not-for-profit corporation engaged in independent research, development, evaluation, and analysis in the behavioral and social sciences. AIR's expertise spans prekindergarten through college and beyond, and includes finance, organizational development, research methodology, statistical and qualitative methods, and evaluation, among many other areas. Researchers at AIR have in-depth knowledge of standards-based reform and college and career readiness.

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**5. How were the states chosen to participate?**

C-SAIL chose to partner with geographically diverse states that are taking a range of approaches to standards-based reform. Our partner states are enthusiastic about participating in research to better understand and inform their standards implementation efforts?

**6. How were districts and schools chosen to participate in the surveys?**

The C-SAIL team drew a random sample of districts from each partner state for the surveys. Schools were then randomly drawn in each sampled district.

**7. The survey sample is intended to include two elementary schools and two high schools from each sampled district. What if our district does not meet these sample size requirement?**

Districts are included as long as they have at least one elementary or high school.

**8. Is participation required?**

Participation is voluntary; however, we strongly encourage everyone in the survey sample to complete the survey. When more people respond, the responses allow state and local policymakers to make better use of the data and provide better supports for educators in your district.

**9. Has the teachers' union approved participation in the survey?**

We can work with you as necessary to inform the union and seek its approval if required.

**10. Has the district approved participation in the survey?**

The C-SAIL team will submit the necessary paperwork and participate in whatever activities (e.g., district research application) are necessary to receive formal approval for conducting the survey in each participating district.

**11. Will my participation affect evaluations?**

Your participation in the survey is confidential and will not affect evaluations of principals or teachers.

**12. Will my responses and my identity be confidential?**

Districts, schools, principals, and teachers will not be named and will not be identifiable based on any information in reports or other documentation. The C-SAIL team will treat your participation and all the information you provide as confidential.

**13. Is the survey approved by an independent Institutional Review Board (IRB)?**

UPenn's, AIR's, and USC's Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) have approved the survey. We will secure approval from district IRBs as required.

**14. How were the surveys developed and who developed them?**

Survey methodologists and content experts from AIR and UPenn developed the surveys. The process of survey development included expert review of survey items to ensure all questions were clear and requested relevant information on standards implementation. In addition, the C-SAIL team conducted one-on-one interviews with a small number of district administrators, principals, and

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teachers to identify potential problems with the wording of questions. Then the team made revisions based on the expert review and the interviews.

**15. Why is C-SAIL using Web-based surveys?**

Web surveys can incorporate “skips” so that respondents see only items that are relevant to their role, making the survey more user friendly and easier to complete. Survey responses are transmitted over a secure server thus enhancing security.

**16. How many districts and schools are participating in the surveys?**

There will be approximately 40-50 districts and up to 200 schools in each partner state participating in the surveys.

**17. What are the processes to keep our data secure and confidential?**

C-SAIL complies with a stringent set of data security requirements for processes and systems that use sensitive data. Our data security and privacy safeguards and procedures are designed not only to comply with relevant statutes but also to meet our ethical obligations to protect personal information of participants. Documentation of our security policies is available upon request.

**18. How long will the survey take to complete?**

The survey will take 30 minutes or less to complete.

**19. Can I share my link to the survey with my colleagues?**

Surveys will be administered through a Web portal. This portal will send each principal and teacher a unique link for individual completion of the survey, which cannot be shared with others.

**20. What types of questions and topics will be covered on the survey?**

The district administrator survey is designed to collect information about the district’s policy, support, and guidance for the implementation of challenging academic state standards. The principal survey is designed to collect information about principals’ instructional and organizational leadership and their guidance and support for standards implementation. The teacher survey is designed to collect information about teachers’ implementation of academic state standards in their classrooms, as it relates to instructional practices, standards-aligned curricular materials, and student assessments. The teacher survey also includes questions about professional development and the availability and sufficiency of supports that teachers receive from various sources, including such materials as detailed curriculum guides, frameworks, or pacing guides.

**21. How will we be compensated for our participation?**

If the district permits, C-SAIL will provide a modest incentive to teachers who complete the survey and to each participating school.

**22. What are the benefits of participating in the survey?**

Participants will have an opportunity to reflect on their implementation of standards and on how implementation has affected student learning. C-SAIL will share the findings with policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders in each state. Reports for each state will describe the level of implementation of the state’s challenging academic state standards and examine the relationship

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between standards implementation and student learning. In addition, C-SAIL will share reports that draw lessons from across the partner states.

**23. Will we learn about the results of the survey?**

Yes, C-SAIL will prepare annual reports for each partner state, describing the status of implementation in the state. The research team will work closely with our state partners to share the results of this work broadly with policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders in each state. No districts will be identifiable in the reports. Annual reports will draw lessons from across the partner states and be designed for a broader national audience looking to learn from the work being done in our partner states. Findings from these reports will be shared through webinars, policy briefs, conference presentations, and peer-reviewed journal articles.

**24. When will the survey administration take place?**

We will administer the district administrator, principal, and teacher surveys online in early spring 2017.

**25. How do we find out more detailed information about the survey? About C-SAIL?**

For more information about the survey or C-SAIL, please contact Dr. Marlene Darwin ([mdarwin@air.org](mailto:mdarwin@air.org), 202-403-5395).